



MEMORANDUM

The Heights

St. Paul Port Authority (SPPA)

November 23, 2022

To: Open Space Work Group Members, SPPA

From: LHB, Inc.

Re: Meeting 2 Design Charette Findings

On November 9th, 2022, the SPPA hosted the second Open Space Work Group meeting for The Heights. LHB led a brainstorming design charrette with the group members that were present that evening, discussing and drawing ideas for public spaces, community amenities, and ecological priorities. Often these ideas relate to specific locations throughout the site, as illustrated in the Master Plan. Many ideas are less related to specific locations and instead highlight themes and priorities that can be applied widely to many areas throughout the site.

LHB provided three base maps and sets of precedent imagery that relate to different types of public space. The first area highlighted was the Neighborhood Node, a location called out in the Master Plan around the intersection of Howard Street and Idaho Avenue as an area meant to “support pedestrian-oriented communities” and to “bring several uses in close proximity to each other to create a place for gathering and activity.” Site amenities that may be helpful precedents when envisioning community spaces for this area include moveable seating, interactive public art, specialty lighting, amphitheater seating, monumental signs with informational kiosks, seating variety, interactive water features, and interactive, life-sized games like giant chess.

The second highlighted topic was the potential for Open Spaces Nodes, which have limitless possibilities and can be peppered throughout the site. Many of these nodes may exist within the street right-of-way, and many of them may exist in the passive open spaces found throughout the new neighborhood. Ideas such as intergenerational exercise equipment, accessible play equipment, interpretive signage, nature play, interactive public art, sensory/music gardens, and trail gateways are all good precedents to begin envisioning the potential of these nodes.

The third discussion topic focused on Wetlands and Stormwater. The site has several existing wetlands, most of which require clean-up remediation due to contamination; however, once remediation is complete, all of the wetlands will be restored in-place or mitigated to an area nearby within the site. These wetlands and their surrounding vegetative buffer zones present a rare opportunity for passive recreation and the create of quiet, contemplative spaces, in a new, thriving neighborhood. Precedents that may provide helpful design direction for these areas include boardwalks, interactive stormwater features, sittable area by the water's edge, a kayak launch, a fishing pier, interpretive signage, a bird watching station, and a floodable plaza.

Group members were split into three groups. Each group spent thirty minutes at each Open Space station, discussing amenities that they would like to see incorporated into the new neighborhood. Many of these ideas were inspired

by other successful projects in St. Paul, such as the amphitheater by Lake Phalen or the programs available throughout the year at Mears Park.

As the groups rotated through the Neighborhood Node station, certain themes were repeatedly voiced. Creating kid-friendly spaces was a priority for many group members, as was diverse offerings for food, relaxation, and gathering. Lighting was frequently mentioned as a means to improve the feeling of safety throughout the Node at all times of the day. And there was a strong desire for a wide range of active programming in the nearby public park.*

Specific ideas that were discussed during at this station include:

- Goup 1
 - + Amphitheater like Phalen
 - + Path and bridges over the road; very safe pedestrian crossings everywhere
 - + Warming house in the park; rentable for events
 - + Benches that convert to picnic tables; flexible spaces!
 - + Speedbumps? Roundabout? Anything that slows traffic down
 - + Skating rink – what else can it be in the summer?
 - + Foursquare, pickleball, tennis, volleyball at the park
 - + Interactive sand art across the street
 - + Kid-oriented activities EVERYWHERE
 - + Food trucks
 - + Daily maintenance for life-size games needs to be considered
 - + Farmer's market area with string lights
 - + Skyway?
 - + Coffee shop! One that featuring cultural coffees, not a chain store
 - + Patio seating for restaurants

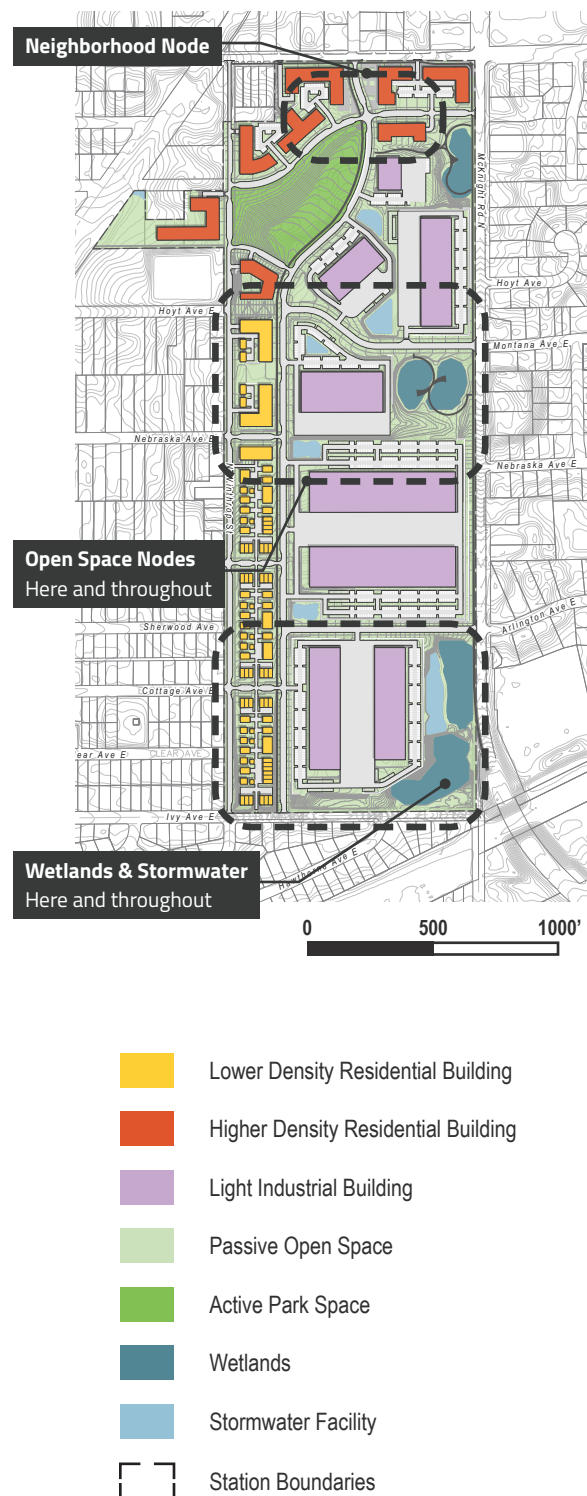


Figure 1 - **A new neighborhood at The Heights:** Building and parking lot layouts are for illustrative purposes only, to convey the general size and distribution of development throughout the site.

*Community engagement for the public park will take place during 2023-24, to determine programming and general design concepts.

- + Skatepark at the public park
- + Sensory gardens throughout – music and color and water and light
- + Colorful windmill/art
- + Public art everywhere
- + Pond ice skating
- + Swinging benches
- + Hammock grove
- + Vertical art
- + Bike stands that look like a bike!
- Group 2
 - + Frame the view into the site with a gateway (Como Park Gates)
 - + Splash pad water feature
- Group 3
 - + Gazebo
 - + Grills
 - + Little Free Library
 - + Water feature with adjacent seating
 - + Specialty lighting; something that makes the area feel safe and unique
 - + Native plantings
 - + Butterfly bench
 - + Beaver Lake
 - + Community gardens
 - + Cross-country ski loop around the public park
 - + Combine farmer's market food trucks with amphitheater space (Mears Park)

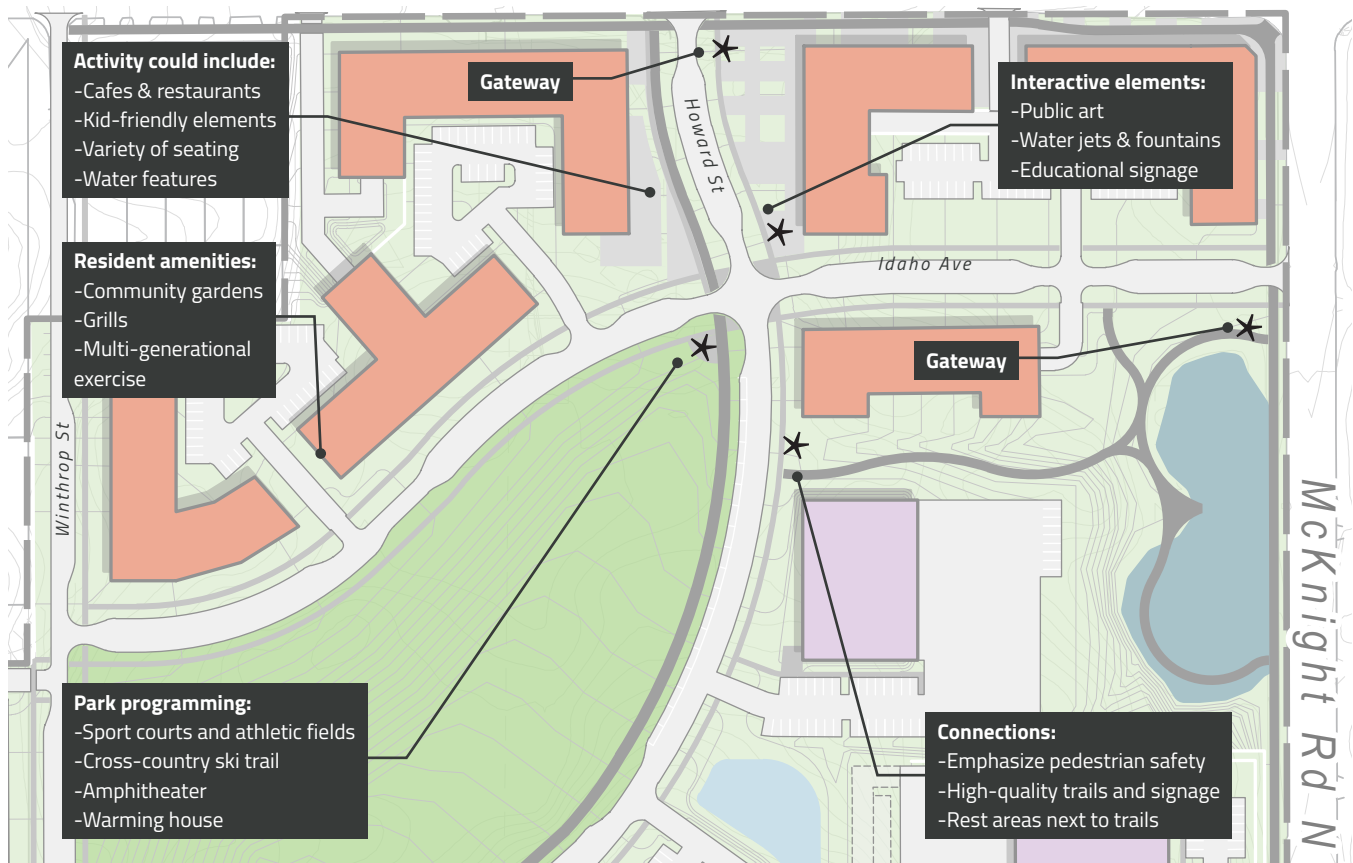


Figure 2 - **Neighborhood Node:** Work group members identified several opportunities for public recreation and gathering spaces in and around the neighborhood node. *Please note, all building and parking lot layouts are for illustrative purposes only. Actual development plans have yet to be determined.

- + Movable seating/gathering for Music in the Park
- + Little Free Exchange Shop (for anything)
- + Walking trails with lights in winter
- + Educational signage – botanical information
- + Labyrinth
- + Hopscotch in pavement
- + Seating
- + Lifesize games
- + Themed community message board – mentorship, recreational organizations
- + Wine bar
- + Coffee/monument signs/welcome (maps that orient you in the site)
- + Outdoor heaters
- + Full spectrum lighting! On a wall for wintertime
- + Priority: high-quality wetland landscaping!
- + Needs a dedicated bike trail
- + Food forest with a nature walk!
- + Walking trails
- + Interpretive signs

The Open Space Nodes station started with a discussion of the possibilities for public amenities with the right-of-way along Howard, but many of these ideas and

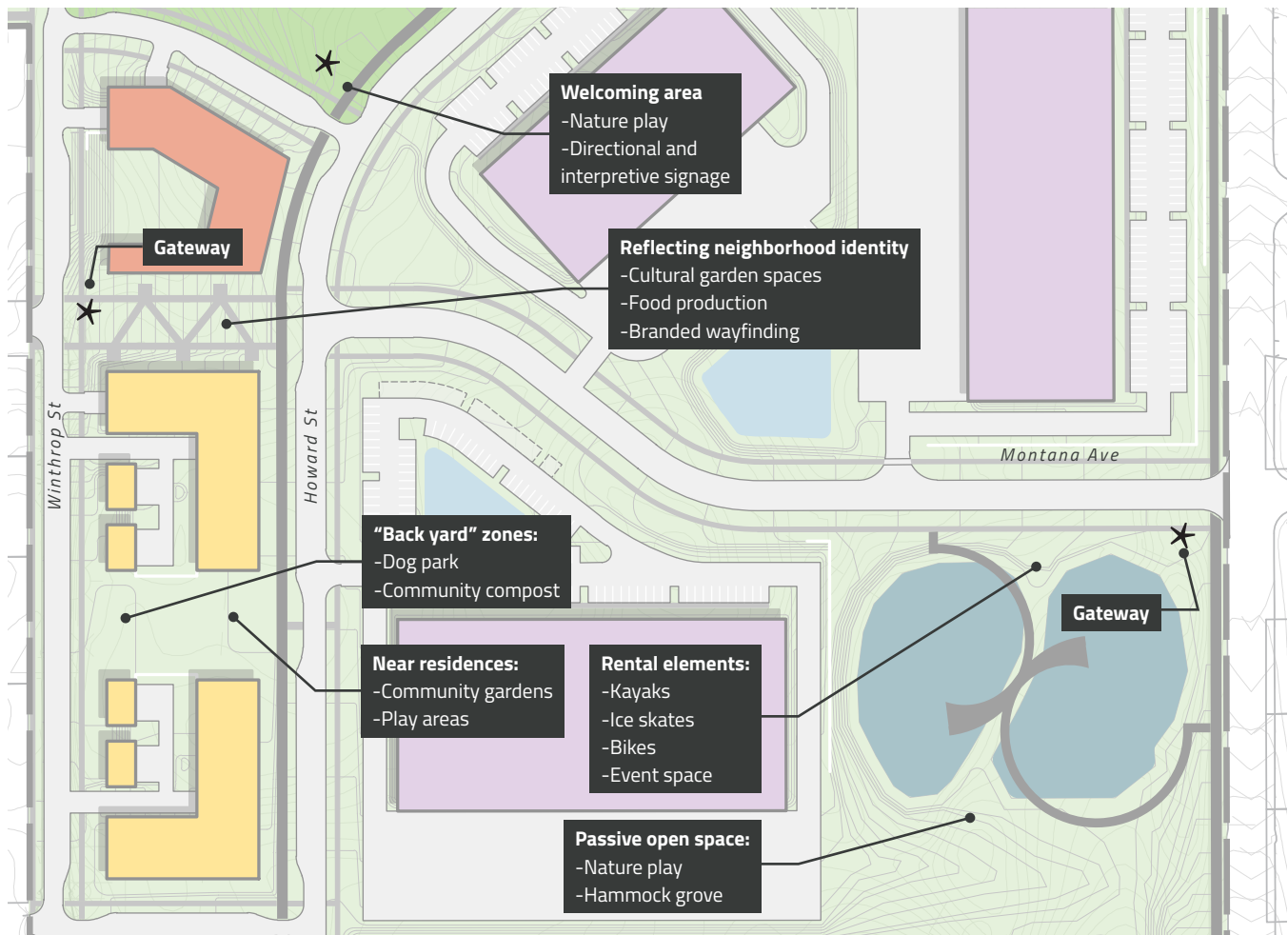


Figure 3 - **Open Space Nodes:** Work group members explored opportunities for resident amenities and the celebration of neighborhood identity. *Please note, all building and parking lot layouts are for illustrative purposes only. Actual development plans have yet to be determined.

The three groups had a large amount of consensus amongst them as to what elements they'd like to see in these areas, which include:

- The station dedicated to discussing Wetlands and Stormwater discussed opportunities for safely interacting with the water within the wetlands and stormwater features throughout the site. These zones provide areas for diverse habitat restoration, as well as opportunities for the quiet and restful enjoyment thereof.

- Group 1
 - + Extend trail and labyrinth
 - + Kayaks
 - + Water access
 - + Fishing pier
 - + Connect to neighborhood
 - + Prairie

- + Ice Skating
- + Boardwalk loop
- + Shelter/warming house craft area
- + Poetry in the sidewalk or permeable pavers with art on them
- + Interpretive signs
- + Benches and tables
- + Shelter/concessions
- + Amphitheater? Floodable? Interactive

- + Community garden and edible landscape in green area
- + Leaf mulch area
- + Landmark tower
- + Kayak!
- + Bike path along Ivy
- + Trails
- + Connect to neighborhood routes
- + Trees
- + Fruit trees
- + Boardwalk
- + Trail
- + Interpretive signs with benches
- + Interpretive/nature center/amphitheater
- + Constructed edge (safety?)

- + Mini-golf to the green area
- + Sledding hill
- + Nesting boxes (birds and bats)
- + Fruit trees
- + Deep enough to fish/boat?? Kayaks and swan boats
- + Diverse floodplain trees
- + Accessible trail

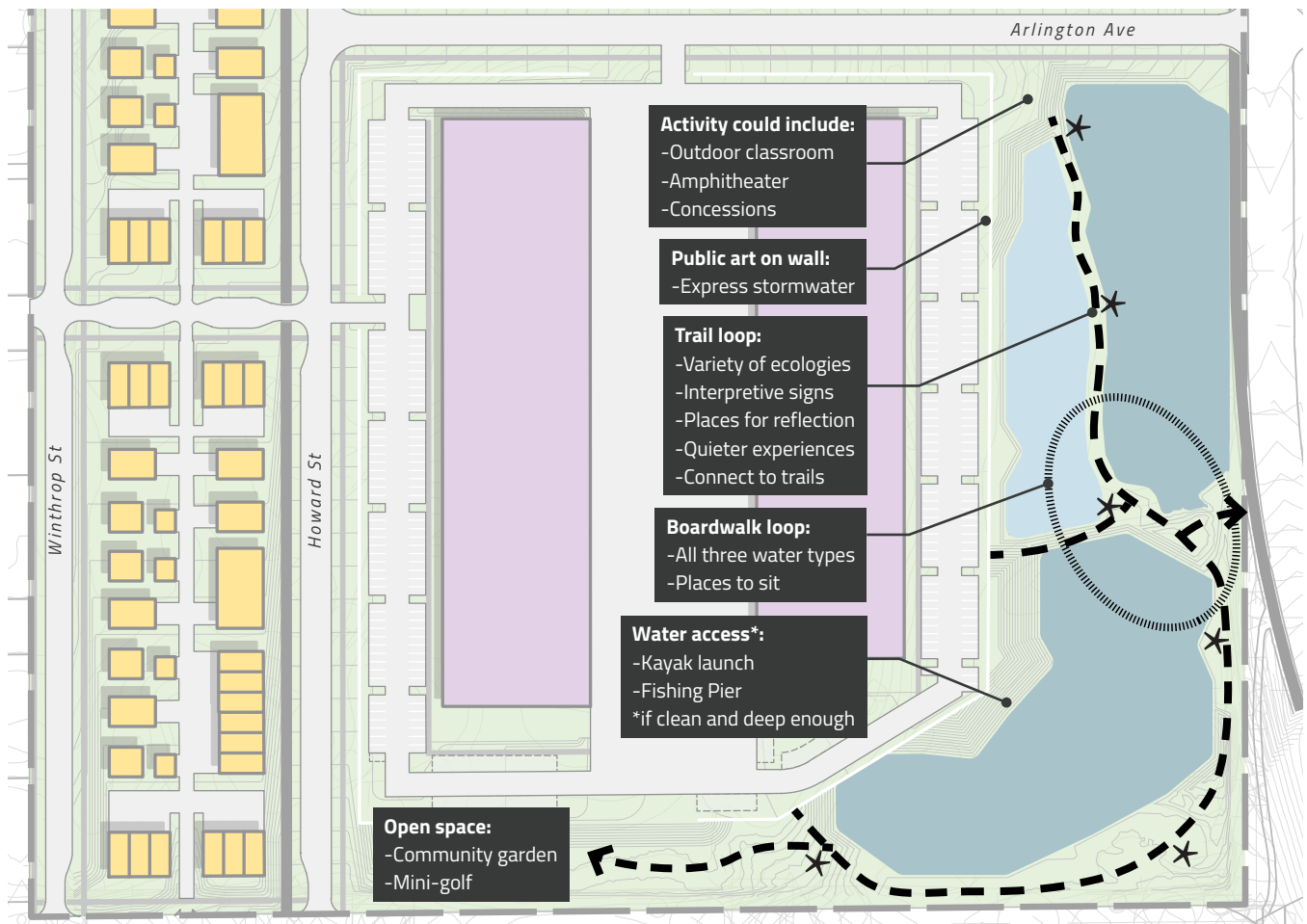


Figure 4 - **Wetlands / Stormwater:** Work group members discussed opportunities for the quiet enjoyment of these areas. *Please note, all building and parking lot layouts are for illustrative purposes only. Actual development plans have yet to be determined.



- + Sensory garden
- + Quiet overlook (birds, plants)
- + Stormwater demonstration
- + Public art on retaining wall
- + Signage spanning stormwater
- + Boardwalk
- + Rain garden
- + Activity node – ice cream, signage, etc.
- + Turtle nest finder
- + Interpretive signs
- + (Swimming benches) quiet seating areas



MEETING MINUTES

The Heights

SPPA

November 9, 2022, Cups and Cheers, 1626 White Bear Ave., St. Paul, MN

To: All Participants
From: LHB, Inc.
Re: Open Space Work Group
Date Sent: November 23, 2022

Meeting Summary

1. Group One:
 - a. Musical elements fun to walk by – culturally relevant local artists. More by dog park less of priority need by housing.
 - b. Play located away from busy streets
 - i. Where people are living
 - ii. Nature play
 - 1) Reflective of local nature by wetlands– also neighbors, relatives, use trees
 - 2) Educational/interpretive.
 - 3) NFWS – MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge
 - c. Place dog park in leftover spaces – subprime
 - i. Backyard amenity vs front yard
 - ii. Not prioritized by everyone
 - d. Community garden
 - i. Who is in charge?
 - ii. Urban roots partnership
 - iii. Food forest
 - iv. Consolidated site
 - e. Accessibility
 - f. Random-meandering signage
 - i. Simple, tied to nature play, multiple languages
 - ii. Storytelling rather than technical visuals – games/rules from different cultures
 - g. Hammock/exercise area near residential areas
 - h. Bus stops – something to do while waiting for public transit
 - i. To do vs to see
2. Group Two:
 - a. Gardens by where people live – combined with residential users
 - b. Herb gardens/Asian gardens – Asian bridge?
 - c. Boulder/rock amphitheater placed near wetlands – close to nodes/residential spaces
 - d. Accessible play and sensory gardens in higher density areas
 - i. Combine sensory and accessible nature play

- e. Nature play in the “wilder” areas
 - f. Keep dog parks away from water
 - g. Mix of path types
 - i. Wood chip vs paved vs boardwalk
 - ii. Walkers vs bikes/scooters
 - iii. Loops are good!
 - h. Food forest south of bigger central wetlands
 - i. Lake Phalen – pavilions – rentable
 - j. Battle Creek/Oakdale Nature Preserve – offshoots where you can wander dirt paths
 - k. Interpretive signage that highlights extinct species
 - i. Past ecosystems
 - 1) “Witches woods” past name for swath of land
 - l. No golfing!
 - m. Maze! Passive space – interpretive
 - n. Hedge trimming – making art out of nature.
 - i. Animals
 - o. Rocks stacked
 - p. Sledding hill
3. Group Three:
- a. Sensory garden – scent, plants, seasonal interest, more natural – mixed with play and natural public art
 - b. Use trees for structure – movable
 - c. No intergenerational exercise equipment
 - d. Like hammock grove – use pine trees!
 - i. Hammock rental (check out location)
 - e. Mini golf
 - f. Sledding hill in more treeless area
 - g. Ice skating
 - h. Pavilion with concessions and rentals (i.e. hammocks, fishing, etc.)
 - i. Japanese garden – cultural gardens
 - i. Native American garden
 - j. Community garden – don’t plant new trees directly south.
 - i. Compost area
 - ii. High density residential
 - k. Stormwater shouldn’t just be turf
 - l. Lots of trees in open space – prioritize evergreen
 - m. Wetlands – cranberry bogs – wild rice
4. Share Your Big Idea!
- a. Give your idea a name: Nature treasure hunt for kids
 - i. This idea applies to:
 - 1) Programs
 - 2) Environment
 - ii. This idea is:

- 1) Realistic....generally it's pretty safe
- iii. Obstacles might include:
 - 1) None
- iv. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Nature treasure hunt for kids with cards giving pictures they need to find the pictured thing.
Dioramas (small) showing what's a prairie, etc., what things they are looking for
- b. Give your idea a name: None
 - i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Wintertime amenities – lighted trail walk with cookies and cocoa and cider
 - 2) Luminaria
 - 3) Outdoor heaters at coffeeshop
- c. Give your idea a name: None
 - i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Interpretive signage along trail – scavenger hunt for kids
 - 2) Benches from trees taken down
 - 3) Interpretive signs where there are different experiences – native plantings
- d. Give your idea a name: None
 - i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Area where people make wishes – notes tied to fence. Make a wish – take a wish
 - 2) Free library – not just books – records, small things
- e. Give your idea a name: None
 - i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Benches that convert to picnic table
 - 2) Kiosk story telling
 - 3) Tall art (vertical/repeating colors, themes)
- f. Give your idea a name: None
 - i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Move some open concept activities into the park
 - 2) Kiosks that have people of the community to tell about their stories
- g. Give your idea a name: None
 - i. This idea applies to:
 - 1) Environment
 - ii. This idea is:
 - 1) Realistic....generally it's pretty safe
 - iii. Obstacles might include:
 - 1) None
 - iv. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Electronic signage with voice options that you can press and listen to a story from an Eastside community member and/or QR code that takes you to an online video to listen
 - a) QR code may not work well for elderly who don't speak English or younger children without a phone
 - b) Hearing the story to hear the language and what it sounds like
 - i) He Mni Can-Barn Bluff signage as an example
- h. Give your idea a name: Town Square

- i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Town square around neighborhood node
 - a) Gazebo
 - b) Musical performances, concerts, events
 - c) Similar to downtown White Bear Lake
 - 2) Dog Park
- i. Give your idea a name: None
- i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Gas grills available for residents near child play area with picnic shelter
 - 2) Leaf compost area
 - 3) Special benches that look like a butterfly – place these near the native plants (butterfly garden)
 - 4) Mini golf in park or near the high density
 - 5) Free little library
- j. Give your idea a name: None
- i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Signage themes:
 - a) History of the golf course
 - b) Ramsey property history
 - c) Indigenous history
 - d) Nature
- k. Give your idea a name: None
- i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Investigate possibility of getting Aldi food to fill one industrial building
- l. Give your idea a name: Wetland & Prairie Plantings
- i. This idea applies to:
 - 1) Environment
- ii. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Prairie plantings to include milkweed and pollinator plants for monarchs and bees. Interpretive signage for education of pollinators and what native plants do for the environment.
 - 2) Signage about wetlands, educational indigenous plants for food, medicinal.
- m. Give your idea a name: None
- i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Ice skating area – on pond?
 - 2) Boardwalks
 - 3) Interpretive amphitheater outdoor
- n. Give your idea a name: None
- i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Solar, sled hill, barrier for traffic, murals
- o. Give your idea a name: Naturalist Programming
- i. Draw, describe, or otherwise communicate your idea:
 - 1) Birding
 - 2) Fishing
 - 3) Outdoor rec

- 4) Macroinvertebrates
- p. Other ideas
 - i. Animal footprints on signage
 - ii. Labyrinth walk-seating
 - iii. Animal droppings – identification
 - iv. Poetry contest short poems in concrete
 - v. Fall project – leaves in waxed paper
 - vi. Native chef preparing food like sumac tea

This constitutes my understanding of items discussed and decisions reached. If there are any omissions or discrepancies, please notify the author in writing.

Attachments: None

c: LHB Project No. 190781

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